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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Twenty-third (extraordinary) session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 36th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Friday, 18 August 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. BONOAN-DANDAN

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (continued)

Third periodic report of Mongolia (continued)

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.40 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (agenda item 6) (continued)

Third periodic report of Mongolia (continued) (E/1994/104/Add.21; E/C.12/CA/MON/1; E/C.12/Q/MONG/1; additional information submitted by the Government of Mongolia (document without a symbol))

1. The CHAIRPERSON, referring to information recently submitted by the Permanent Mission of Mongolia on the situation of women and children, invited the Committee to continue its consideration of the third periodic report of Mongolia. In the absence of a delegation from Mongolia, the Committee would draw up concluding observations and send them to the Government through the Permanent Mission.

2. Mr. CEVILLE welcomed the submission by the Government of comprehensive and updated information on poverty-related problems; it would be very useful to the Committee as it drew up its concluding observations. The Government's description generally coincided with that given by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

3. Mr. CEAUSU said that the case of Mongolia highlighted the problems encountered by Governments of countries in transition as they attempted to secure sufficient social funding to meet their international obligations. While the Government had adopted new social legislation and established a number of national programmes, the transition to a market economy had taken place at the expense of the population's economic rights. International financial institutions had not concentrated sufficiently on developing the country's export capacity and maintaining its industrial and agricultural productivity. Mongolia had accumulated a large external debt. He wondered how the borrowed funds had been used.

4. Mr. ANTANOVICH, noting the extreme difficulties that Mongolia had encountered during the transition process, said that it was clear that the Government had the will to take action but was severely hampered by the dire economic situation. It must establish priorities in tackling the numerous economic and social problems, first and foremost by addressing the plight of the country's children, many of whom were not afforded an education or did not have a proper home.

5. Mr. SADI said that, in the information it had submitted, the Government had been particularly candid about the country's social difficulties, including poverty, teenage suicide, street children, prostitution, drugs and economic decline. The Government was to be commended for recognizing the existence of such problems, as a necessary first step in tackling them.

6. Mr. PILLAY, while endorsing Mr. Sadi's view that the Government was to be commended for its candid approach, felt that it was all the more surprising that no delegation had been sent.

7. Mr. AHMED also regretted that the State party had not sent a delegation to engage in a discussion with the Committee. He would have liked to ask what steps were being taken to tackle such issues as the budget deficit, the external debt and the serious decline in agricultural production. The Committee could only express the hope in its concluding observations that the Government would take effective measures to deal with those problems..

8. Mr. PILLAY said that the Committee should note in its concluding observations that the lack of subsidies for State enterprises had resulted in a sharp increase in unemployment.

9. The CHAIRPERSON, while thanking the Permanent Mission for the submission of supplementary information, said that she would convey to the Government the Committee's disappointment that it had not been able to engage in a constructive dialogue owing to the Government's decision not to send a delegation.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (agenda item 2) (continued)

Scheduling of consideration of reports

10. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee had received notes verbales from the Permanent Missions of Venezuela, Japan and Peru requesting the scheduling or rescheduling of the Committee's consideration of their reports. The Government of Peru in particular had requested permission to submit its second periodic report on the period 1990-2000, with the focus on the three years since its initial report had been considered in 1997, and proposed to submit a third periodic report in 2005, so as to bring itself into line with the reporting schedule.

11. Mr. HUNT stated that in the past the Committee had specified reporting time frames at the end of its consideration of each report, using criteria such as the quality of the report and its dialogue with the State party. The time frame for the submission of Peru's third periodic report should be set by the Committee once it had concluded its consideration of the second periodic report.

12. The CHAIRPERSON, said that all concluding observations issued by the Committee should specify the time frame for submission of subsequent reports.

13. Mr. CEAUSU noted that the Committee was scheduled to consider five country reports per session. Perhaps it would be more advisable to plan for six, as Governments sometimes requested postponements or schedule changes with little notice.

14. Mr. GRISSA felt that it would not be proper to schedule the consideration of more reports than the Committee could handle in a single session. If no State party cancelled, the Committee would arbitrarily have to postpone one report to the following session.

15. Mr. HUNT said that it would be preferable to secure a firm list of five States for the next session, and to seek others only if one of the five replied, within two weeks, that it could not observe the Committee's timetable. The secretariat would then have two full months to find a replacement. Inviting six States parties to a single session would cast doubt on the participation of all the States in the session.

16. It was so decided.

Citation of sources of information in lists of issues

17. Mr. HUNT inquired whether the Committee should cite its sources of information in the lists of issues sent to Governments.

18. The CHAIRPERSON replied that the Committee's practice had been not to mention sources in lists of issues, unless it had based itself on the reports of States parties. However, when questions were based largely on information from other sources, perhaps the Committee should mention that fact, provided it did not jeopardize the safety or physical integrity of the source. In any event, the country rapporteur should keep on hand the list of sources in case they were challenged.

19. Mr. KOUZNETSOV agreed that, wherever possible, sources should be given. However, that would not always be possible, owing to the sensitive relationship between certain NGOs and Governments.

20. Mr. WIMER ZAMBRANO said that while in some cases it would be proper to cite sources of information, that should not necessarily be the rule. One of the Committee's main sources of information was the United States Department of State, and such information would be deemed to be highly political.

21. Mr. CEAUSU said that the Committee should establish guidelines on the use of information in drawing up lists of issues. Sources of information must be public and written, and thus verifiable, such as reports issued by the United Nations, its specialized agencies or committees of experts. References to other public documents such as those put out by NGOs, the United States Department of State, the Economist Intelligence Unit or the United States Central Intelligence Agency should not be made in writing, but orally by Committee members.

22. Ms. JIMÉNEZ BUTRAGUEÑO said that the Committee should always cite its sources when the information it used came from any of the treaty bodies or from United Nations specialized agencies, as that would add weight to the points it raised. The phrase "according to information received" should be used only orally, and never in writing.

23. Mr. SADI pointed out that many questions could be phrased in such a way that there would be no need to reveal sources of information.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.